



State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509
Country Inn & Suites
5353 North 27th
Lincoln, NE
April 10, 2007
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Public notice of upcoming meetings will be available on the Department of Education website under “conferences & meetings” as least 5 days prior to each meeting.

Present: *Debra Bauer, Sharon Bloechle, Don Crouch, Katie Durfee, Alvin Fox, Sandy Ham, Anna Harpster, Jay Ice, Jason Kerkman, Les Kimmons, Frank Lloyd, Larry Niemeyer, Kipp Ransom, Vicki Rasmussen, Mark Schultz, Merwyn Vavrina, and Terry Lee Wilson*

Absent: *Linda Douglas, Gayle Hahn, Marc Hultine, Mike Newman, Pearl VanZandt*

Minutes by *Sherlyn Nitzsche*

Sharon Bloechle called the meeting to order

I Public Comment/Announcements

None

II. Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Merwyn Vavrina to approve the agenda. The agenda was accepted by unanimous consent.

III. Approval of minutes from December 5, 2006

Motion made by Alvin Fox to approve the December 5th minutes. The minutes were accepted by unanimous consent.

IV Director’s Report (*Frank Lloyd*)

1. ***Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Review*** We completed the first part of the Federal Review. The review was conducted March 12-14. The unofficial (verbal) response from the reviewer is that our fiscal records and automated system are excellent. They particularly liked the way consumer data and financial data are integrated. For example, you can’t authorize services for a consumer until they have a valid IPE approved in QUEST – our automated data system.

The Program Review was conducted March 19-21. It included discussion with most of the State Office staff and 5 of our 14 employment teams: Lincoln – Gaylen Roger’s team, Fremont – Melanee Petersen’s team, Columbus – Larry Niemeyer’s team, Norfolk – Bernie Craven’s team, and Grand Island – Judy Vohland’s team. Many of the Service

Specialists and Rehab Specialists were interviewed individually – in private. In our exit interview the Federal Reviewers said they were impressed with the collaborative way that the teams work together. They felt they had a better idea how Nebraska’s Employment Teams provide staff services to consumers. Understanding the effectiveness of our team structure was an area of great interest to the reviewers.

Part of the Federal Team will return May 21 – 23 for a follow-up meeting and goal setting discussion.

2. **Omaha West Office Move** The bids are in for the renovations. Work is to begin the week of March 26th. We hope to have an anticipated move-in date from KVI Construction by March 30.
3. **Mental Health Supported Employment Agreements** With input from consumers and providers, we are making some major changes in the way we fund SE services with the mental health providers. We are moving from service-based funding to performance-based funding. The new requirements are being sent to interested providers who are currently funded by HHS. We will be evaluating each providers proposal in May in time for them to be approved at the June meeting of the Board of Education.
4. **Emerging Leaders Project** Thirty-eight staff have submitted their name to be included on the Emerging Leaders list. Margy and I will be meeting with these staff at one of the three one-day scheduled meetings on June 5, 6 or 8th in Lincoln. In these small groups of 12-13 staff we will talk about the leadership needs of Voc Rehab, future directions we are considering and why. We will also discuss their views on a variety of leadership issues. We will provide more information at the next SRC meeting.
5. **Placement Committee Update** Based on the recommendations of the Placement Committee, placement staff and each Employment Team will develop an annual marketing strategy that includes:
 - Targeting particular employers based on the labor market, future trends and client needs.
 - Utilizing the National Employment Team (The NET) to connect the local labor demand with national opportunities.
 - Developing employer accounts through long-term relationships that will lead to future employment opportunities in high growth areas.
 - Developing scholarships with employers for transition students to learn basic skills for employment.
6. **State Plan Update** – Within the next two months we will be completing a new State Plan for FY2008. The Plan will remain in effect until the Rehabilitation Act is reauthorized. At that time we will be required to develop a new State Plan that is consistent with the new provisions of the Act.
7. **Six-Month Team Meetings** In April Margy and I will visit each of the 14 Employment Teams around the state. In addition to sharing our 6-month “State of the Agency” message we will be asking for team comments, suggestions and concerns. We will be

meeting with each team – not individual staff. Individual meetings are planned for the fall after our State Staff Training.

8. **TBI Screening Instrument - HELPS** The HELPS TBI screening instrument that was piloted in four offices has been expanded to all VR offices. The pilot study clearly indicated the value of the screening tool in counseling. Based on this 5 minute screening, approximately 17.7% of all new applicants in the pilot group could be experiencing a brain injury. This has significant implication for vocational planning. The staff in the pilot group said they would continue to use the screening instrument even if it was not required.

Summary data we collect on the screening instrument (no client identifiable data will be submitted) will be included in a research project conducted by Dr. Karen Huxx at UNL. Dr. Huxx is a Professor of TBI in the Speech and Language Department at the Barkley Center. The data will further help confirm the validity of the HELPS screening instrument. The Nebraska TBI Advisory Council supports this project. The Council is co-sponsored by the Department of Education, Special Education and Vocational Rehabilitation, and Nebraska Health and Human Services.

9. **Customer Satisfaction Survey** We are trying to find a more effective way to receive consumer satisfaction responses. Prior use of survey post cards provided positive feedback to selected staff but the consumers' responses only provide global information regarding levels of satisfaction. These responses were not helpful regarding specific improvements we need to make. We are working with Larry Niemeyer (VR Representative to the SRC) and his staff to pilot a questionnaire that we believe will achieve 3 principles of good consumer satisfaction feedback: (1) Proximity — the questions will be asked immediately following the service, (2) Specificity — the questions will target specific staff requirements in delivering the service, (3) Anonymity — the questions will be asked in private at a computer. We envision the survey would be carried out under the support of the State Rehabilitation Council. More details will be provided at the June 12, 2007 SRC meeting for the Council to consider.

Motion made by Les Kimmons that VR continue the consumer input project and develop appropriate questions. Merwyn Vavrina seconded the motion. The motion was accepted by unanimous consent.

V. Old Business

A. None

VI. New Business

A. VR Staff to Discuss Transition Activities & Challenges (*Jack Shepard*)

Lenette Sprunk and Paige Rose Merrifield each shared information regarding VR transition services. VR has a presence in all high schools across the state. Lenette and Paige expressed that every transition counselor works differently and has very big caseloads with many transition students plus additional adult cases. VR would like to develop more standards and consistency across the state.

All services are no cost services in transition. Some of the activities that transition counselors perform are: attend IEP meetings, conduct vocational evaluations, disability awareness, job listings to schools, job seeking skills, and employment success skills. They also arrange job shadows and employer tours.

VR Transition counselors work closely with partners in the community such as ESUs, Education Quest, WFD, and employers. They work very closely with ESUs to make sure their students are getting all the services they need.

Most transition counselors work with juniors and seniors on an individual basis with seniors receiving priority. Freshman and sophomores also receive services but do more in the way of group activities. The time spent in schools varies greatly depending on the counselor and the need of the school.

Several struggles for transition counselors were shared. The two main struggles expressed were late referrals in the senior year and having appropriate testing to follow students to post secondary schooling. Also getting an adult or guardian signature on forms can be problematic which can delay the whole process.

B. Take Motion to Amend Operational Procedures (*Don Crouch*)

Revisions to the by-laws were discussed in the December 2006 meeting. These are necessary to comply with the Nebraska Open Meetings Law.

Merwyn Vavrina suggested one addition that was accepted as a friendly amendment to the motion made later by Vicki Rasmussen. The addition requires minutes (in draft form) of each meeting to be available for public inspection within 10 working days.

Motion made by Vicki Rasmussen to approve the recommendation posted in the December 2006 minutes to revise the operational procedures with today's addition. Terry Wilson seconded the motion. The motion was accepted by unanimous consent.

C. Palliative Care Project (*LaDonna VonEngen*)

LaDonna from Saint Elizabeth's Hospice spoke on the Palliative Care Project. Ticket to Work is funding the Palliative Care Project, which will give Nebraskans with disabilities palliative care interventions to help address pain, symptoms and psychosocial issues that create a barrier to employment. She discussed goals and eligibility requirements of the program. The first timeline of the project was from November 2006 to February 2007 and since has been extended to February 2008. There have been 5 applicants to date, one has returned to work and the others are in various stages of progress.

D. Transition Survey Results (*Jack Shepard*)

Reported in the Transition Committee Report

E. Omaha Correctional Project (*Jen Papproth*)

The Omaha Correctional Project is modeled after the Juvenile Justice Program. This project is working with individuals with drug and alcohol offenses and the team-oriented approach seems to be working well with this population. Jen's caseload is about 20 individuals. She has a lot of contact with her clients. Her main focus is to reintegrate them back into society and employment through placement. She also is making contact with employers around the area who seem to be pretty receptive.

F. New Senators—How do we give them information (Don Crouch)

Reported in Employer Services Committee report.

G. State Plan Final Input (*Don Crouch*)

The Council is encouraged to attend the VR Public Hearings to include any new recommendations or input for the State Plan.

VII. Reports

A. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

Vicki was not present. The written CAP report was mailed to members with the April 10th meeting agenda.

B. SILC Report (*Alvin Fox*)

Goal: Advocacy: SILC plans to provide information to new state senators, develop legislation to expand and enhance the current Medicaid Buy-in Program, develop legislation to reduce and eliminate the use of restraints and seclusion in state institutions, and develop legislation to improve the quality and quantity of housing available for persons with disabilities.

Goal: Public Information: SILC plans to create promotional material focusing on IL issues and the role of the SILC and disseminate information regarding laws, regulations, court precedence, and statistical data affecting people with disabilities.

Goal: Resource Development: SILC plans to secure technical assistance to develop a strategic plan for the SILC, apply for at least 2 grants per year to implement the objectives of SILC, develop a plan to generate at least 1 non-grant funding source that produces unrestricted income, pursue alternative sources of funding and provide technical assistance to help promote development of CILs and maximize utilization of Part B funds for client services.

C. ATP Report (*Mark Schultz*)

Since VR has been referring to ATP it has been found that there was a need to make referrals for earlier involvement for assistive technology services. The brochure is out that will be distributed to schools, etc. for services through ATP in the Kearney and Omaha areas.

D. Committee Reports

1. Client Services Committee (*Les Kimmons*)

The VR purchase of vehicles policy was discussed. Vicki Rasmussen found information from other states on what their policy is. Ten states do not purchase vehicles; seven states will but with differing criteria. Discussion was centered around what kind of criteria do we need and how do we fund.

The Easter Seals Loan Program was discussed. The majority of loans go for the purchase of the vehicle – modifications usually come from different sources. The loan program requires the client's ability to pay back the loan or a co-signor and Easter Seals will turn down some applications due to bad credit history or inability to pay back.

Other issues were discussed such as long-term support of the vehicle and the use of public transportation. The question of VR having the option of using state surplus vehicles for consumers was raised. This is an issue that needs much more consideration.

2. Employer Services Committee (*Sandy Ham*)

The Team Marketing Policy is on VRIS as well as the form for use. The new form has been developed to help identify new employers to whom we should market

National Employment Team Net is moving along and showing great promise.

The question of how to get information to new senators was discussed. Motion made by Employer Services Committee that the State Rehabilitation Council sponsor a breakfast in January 2008 for State senators to educate them about VR services. Motion accepted by unanimous consent.

Ways were discussed to achieve better referrals to VR. Encourage collaboration with other agencies, service providers, and nonprofits to generate better referrals to VR. Also, asking for consumer input was suggested.

Sandy Ham new chairperson.

3. Transition Services Committee (*Jack Shepard*)

Jack shared results from the Schools Survey. There was a response rate of 56%. Jack was encouraged with this. The schools seem to know who and what VR is about. Since this is the first time a survey has been done the results reflect baseline information. Hopefully, numbers will be getting better if we do it again. There are several areas that can be discussed and investigated as possible ideas to implement. VR is looking for recommendations from the Council in the June meeting as to what new ideas to implement. The council members were provided a copy of the PowerPoint with survey results so they can consider any recommendations to be made at the next meeting.

Sharon Bloechle adjourned the meeting.